

Testimony of Lloyd Feinberg, Manager of USAID's Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (DCOF)

Protecting Street Children: Vigilantes or the Rule of Law

**Before the House Committee on International Relations Subcommittee
on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations
Washington, D.C.
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Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, I am honored to be able to sit before you again. You may recall that on June 23, Dr. Danuta Lockett and I had the privilege to exchange views with the committee on the U.S. Agency for International Development's Victims of Torture Fund.

In this instance, I am pleased to have the opportunity to share with you information on what USAID is doing to prevent as well as protect vulnerable children, and specifically those children who do not enjoy the care and protection of a family or family-like environment.

I would like to suggest at the start, however, that while many of our activities do indeed address the issues of "street children," I believe it is important to ensure that we not allow ourselves to "pigeon-hole" or "stovepipe" any children into categories which might unintentionally serve to undermine the development or funding of appropriate and effective programs that are designed to address their needs.

For example, most of the activities that the DCOF supports involve children who could be included under a number of descriptors.

- Many children are separated from their families as a result of conflict.
- Others have served as child soldiers or slaves to combatants.
- Others are orphaned or otherwise affected by HIV/AIDS.
- An unconscionable number of children worldwide suffer labor, sexual or other forms of inhumane exploitation, including human trafficking.
- One of the most heinous and objectionable phenomena that I have encountered (and USAID is addressing) is the widening practice in Angola and the two Congos, of accusing children of witchcraft and then subjecting them to cruel "exorcisms" that are tantamount to torture.

At the present time, the Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (DCOF), which I manage, provides financial as well as technical support in over 19 countries. We have programmed more than \$160 million since the Fund's inception in 1989. In FY 2005, we have obligated approximately \$14 million. In 15 of these countries, DCOF supports activities that address issues related to street children.

Besides the significant programs that support street children, accused child-witches and other vulnerable children that I alluded to earlier in the two Congos and Angola, USAID also currently supports significant NGO-supported activities that help street children in such countries as Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Georgia, Liberia, Indonesia, Uganda, Ukraine, Sri Lanka and Zambia.

With respect to some of the other presenters today, I would like to mention that in Brazil, we have recently completed a ten-year DCOF investment in a major street children's program, called POMMAR, in the impoverished northeast sector of the country. That program is now being followed up with a highly innovative Youth Employability Strengthening project.

The program in northern Uganda is primarily focused on children abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army who are

now living in severe conditions in camps.

In the mid to late 1990s, DCOF also supported two excellent and innovative street children's programs in the Philippines (where I was honored to serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the 1960s) and in Thailand.

In each of these countries, USAID tries to ensure that our supported activities have the greatest potential impact on the greatest number of children.

We believe that from the perspective of an international donor agency, we need to strike a healthy balance in order to avoid supporting programs that may have great impact for a relatively small number of children, as well as programs that have little or no impact but purport to reach thousands of children.

In directing our funds, we try to support activities that do the following:

- Ensure that every child has access to a caring and responsible adult who, ideally, can provide that child with unconditional love and understanding.
- Prioritize early interventions, in terms of:
 - age of the children
 - length of time on the street, and
 - prevention of family dissolution.
- Strengthen institutional and human capacity of indigenous, child care and protection organizations, both in governmental as well as non-governmental sectors.
- Support responsible monitoring and evaluation of activities to ensure that USAID funded grantees employ meaningful outcomes, and, where possible, measurable impact indicators on the well-being of children.
- Support collection and sharing of information on successful (and unsuccessful) interventions with a view to strengthening the state of the art and the identification of replicable approaches and models.
- Support the strengthening of national standards and the appropriate roles of government which encourage the involvement of civil society, including NGOs, faith-based organizations and professional and business communities in child care and protection.
- Support and advocate for appropriate host country legal reform.

I am pleased to be able to provide you with a copy of a full report on the 2004 - 2005 DCOF activities.

I would be happy to respond to any questions that you or the members of your committee might like to ask, and I thank you for the opportunity to present you with this information.